

ANNUAL REPORT 2025

RELEASED: AUGUST 2026



A greener tomorrow
starts today

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Key Accomplishments for 2025



Strengthened communication with town staff. Identified Town Council liaison; held monthly meetings with Town Manager; deepened relationships with town personnel.



Enhanced resident communication. Launched community email **newsletter** averaging 2,700 readers per issue; presented **WHCi** talk shows on waste and energy efficiency; developed content for website; continued **Facebook** and **Instagram** presence.



Engaged hundreds of residents at Celebrate West Hartford; Sun Day Electric Showcase; Wolcott Pollinator Habitat Open House.



Promoted **food scrap drop-off program**, diverting **66,000 pounds** of food from the waste stream. Doubled pumpkin recycling at **33,000 pounds**.



Prepared land and installed plants to establish the **Wolcott Pollinator Meadow**, in collaboration with West Hartford Garden Club and Leisure Services and Public Works staff.



Drafted **sustainable development checklist**, modeled on City of Stamford guidelines, to signal the town's commitment to sustainability for new construction.



Secured Town Council resolution to include West Hartford in the **Federal Highlands Region**, making West Hartford eligible for future federal grants for land conservation.



Established coalition for **Thermal Energy Networks (TEN4WH)** to explore long-term possibilities for town using ground-source heat exchange and heat pumps to move thermal energy where it's needed, creating smart infrastructure for climate-friendly heating and cooling.



Partnered with Community Development staff to evaluate City of Bristol's successful **bioswale green infrastructure** project as a model for local flood mitigation and climate resilience.

2026 Priorities

The following priorities emerged from our November 2025 brainstorming session. We welcome the support and participation of Town Council, Town Staff, residents, businesses, and institutions in pursuing these priorities and making West Hartford **cleaner, greener, cooler, and more sustainable**.



Expand tree canopy. Educate Town and residents and promote action to reverse the significant 20-year loss of tree canopy.



Expand native habitat. Educate and work with residents and the Town to expand native plantings through mechanisms such as Less Lawn, More Life, and Pollinator Pathways.



Reduce and divert waste.

- Expand and further promote the town's food scraps drop-off program.
- Explore the economic case for the curbside pickup of food scraps.
- Educate residents to avoid common contaminants in waste and recycling.



Monitor Plan of Conservation & Development (POCD). Work with appropriate commissions and staff to track and implement specific conservation goals in the POCD.



Promote energy efficiency and clean energy in residential and business sectors.

- Encourage residents and businesses to adopt efficient clean energy technologies such as electric vehicles, heat pumps, solar.
- Update Town's Clean Energy Plan.
- Integrate Sustainability Checklist into Town's planning or permitting process.
- Socialize concept of thermal energy networks (TEN4WH).



Build commission website to promote sustainability practices for residents, businesses, and institutions.



Connect to Sustainable CT framework. Identify actions within the framework supporting our 2026 priorities and work with the Town's Sustainable CT 2027 Certification Committee to implement them.



Promote climate resilience through green infrastructure.

Promote Town and residential use of green infrastructure (e.g., trees, bioswales, rain gardens) to reduce stormwater flooding and heat island effects.

Recommendations to Town Leadership

To build on West Hartford's status as a statewide climate leader, the Sustainable West Hartford Commission recommends three streamlined, cost-effective strategies to integrate sustainability into Town operations, protect fiscal resources, and more fully engage the community.



1. Institutionalize Sustainability Across Municipal Operations

- **Apply a Sustainability Lens:** Integrate sustainability criteria early into town planning, budgeting, and procurement processes to future-proof municipal investments against a changing climate and ensure long-term infrastructure resilience without costly retrofits.
- **Establish a Dedicated Sustainability Coordinator:** Work toward funding a dedicated staff position—like proven municipal models in Groton, New Haven, and Bridgeport — focused on securing grants, tracking cost-savings, environmental benefits, and serving as a central point of contact to streamline the town's sustainability initiatives.
- **Identify Departmental Points of Contact:** In the interim, identify technical points of contact for key departments to ensure support and provide smooth, timely feedback on Commission initiatives and recommendations, in addition to the existing staff and mayoral liaison roles.

2. Execute and Track Adopted Town Commitments

- **Execute Existing Mandates:** Partner with town staff to identify, implement and track goals already established in the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD), Clean Energy Plan, Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan, Climate Crisis Resolution, and Pollinator-Friendly Community Resolution.
- **Support and Scale High-Impact Initiatives:** Establish regular, focused strategy sessions to align Commission priorities and Sustainable CT actions, draw on municipal best practices, and actively pursue relevant grants and community match funds.

3. Support Professional Community Engagement

- **Establish a Modest Operating Budget:** Allocate a dedicated annual budget of \$5,000–\$10,000 for public educational events, outreach materials, and marketing tools. This small, high-yield investment eliminates the reliance on volunteers paying out-of-pocket and ensures highly professional, effective town-wide communication that drives local participation.

PURPOSE, DUTIES & AUTHORITIES

Commission Purpose

The Sustainable West Hartford Commission, a merger of the former Conservation and Clean Energy Commissions, was established by ordinance adopted June 13, 2023 as [Part 1, Article XVI](#) of the Town Code.

As described in Town Code [§5-72](#), the Town Council established this 11-member body to:

- Promote practices leading to greater environmental, social, and economic sustainability.
- Ensure a high quality of life for present and future generations by fostering an inclusive, resilient community.
- Encourage the responsible use and conservation of energy and natural resources.

Duties and Responsibilities

As described in Town Code [§5-77](#), [Duties and responsibilities](#), the Commission shall:

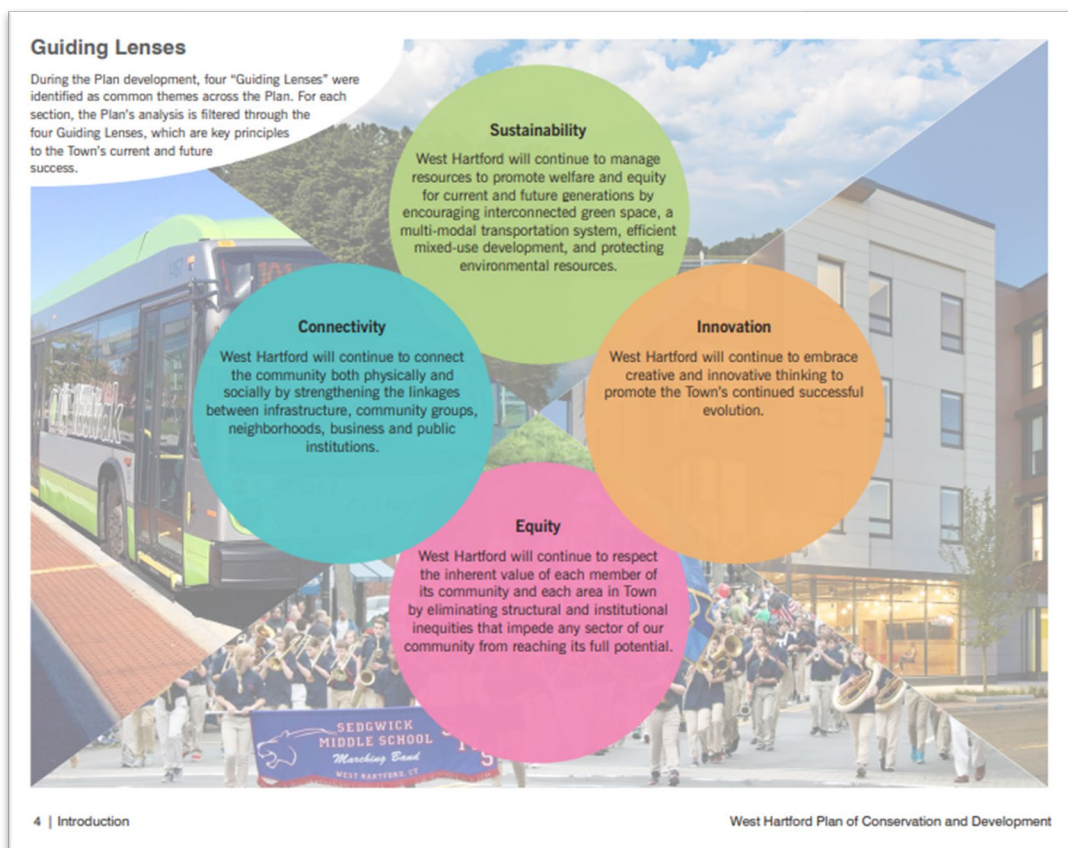
- Identify and prioritize concerns and issues relating to long-term environmental, social, and economic sustainability** of the Town of West Hartford with due consideration of local, regional, state, national, and global contexts.
- Advise and make recommendations to the Town Manager** on policies, programs and proposals regarding sustainable practices including, but not limited to, environmental and ecological resources, air, water, energy, land, waste, materials management, transportation, climate change, equity, and environmental justice.
- Collaborate with and serve as a resource for Town Council, Town departments, boards, commissions, and committees of the Town, and the community at large** in order to advance a comprehensive, integrated approach to sustainability.
- Develop and encourage efforts, relationships and resources to **educate and act on sustainability** within our community and beyond and to serve as a **community liaison** for issues, ideas, and proposals.
- File an **annual written report** with the Town Council. Such report shall include a summary of current sustainability initiatives, as well as recommendations for future sustainability initiatives and policy.

Supporting Authorities

West Hartford has a proud history of adopting forward-thinking sustainability policies. The Commission highlights these authorities not just as a record of past milestones, but as a foundation for turning these pronouncements into measurable results.

The following authorities underscore the town's commitment to sustainability and the need to integrate a sustainability ethic across town processes, strategies, and goals:

- [Plan of Conservation and Development, 2020–2030](#): Formally establishes sustainability as a mandatory “**Guiding Lens**” and key principle for all current and future town success (Page 4).
- [Town Energy Plan \(2020\)](#): Sets the explicit, community-wide benchmark “for our **entire community** to use 100% clean energy by 2050.”
- [Climate Crisis Resolution \(2022\)](#): Declared a climate crisis “that **requires immediate action**,” setting the baseline urgency for municipal operations.
- [Pollinator-Friendly Community Resolution \(2024\)](#): Commits the town to active restoration of local ecosystems and native habitats and encouraging the same of residents.
- [State of the Town Address \(2025\)](#): Reaffirmed executive priority, with Mayor Shari Cantor highlighting sustainability as a top municipal focus.
- [Sun Day Proclamation \(2025\)](#): Mayor Cantor’s Proclamation urges residents to accelerate the adoption of clean energy practices.



ENERGY ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Residential Energy Efficiency

- Launched a targeted digital campaign on WeHa.com that generated 80 direct resident leads for the **Home Energy Solutions (HES)** program. Produced an educational video with West Hartford Clean Energy (WHCi) to expand program participation: <https://youtu.be/672Q5P3D6ro>.
- Established a pilot partnership with the Town's **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program and CT DEEP** to help income-eligible residents remove barriers to weatherization.
- Leveraged the newsletter to demystify **heat pump technology**, resulting in a surge of inquiries regarding federal tax credits and state incentives.

Small Business Outreach

- Partnered with the Elmwood Business Association to connect local business owners with the **Small Business Energy Advantage (SBEA) program**, which reduces energy costs through turnkey efficiency upgrades.

Sustainable Building & Planning

- Drafted a new municipal **Sustainable Development Checklist**, modeled on Stamford's successful framework, to integrate clean energy and resiliency criteria into municipal building and planning review processes.
- Engaged with design team on the **new Elmwood Community Center** to advocate for sustainable design features and recommend investigation of new, innovative energy efficient windows and HVAC, air-quality technologies

Clean Energy & Technology Innovation

- Coordinated the flagship public **Electric Showcase** for "Sun Day" on September 20, 2025, at Town Hall in partnership with the Sierra Club of CT. This "owner-to-neighbor" event educated hundreds of residents on heat pumps, electric vehicles, and e-bikes.
- Continued strong **residential solar** promotion, helping sustain a multi-year local expansion with **219 new residential solar installations** completed across town in 2025 alone. Promoted residential solar projects in newsletter to take advantage of federal tax benefits before they expired. From 2023 to 2025, West Hartford residents installed 758 solar installations (332 in 2023, 207 in 2024).
- Formed a dedicated local working group to join the statewide **TEN4CT initiative**, creating a Thermal Energy Opportunities Chart to position West Hartford for upcoming state grants and pilot ground-source heat exchange infrastructure.

WASTE & RECYCLING ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Overview

2025 marked a new chapter for the Waste Working Group. Following the 2024 Town Council decision not to pursue Unit-Based Pricing, the Commission pivoted to promoting a voluntary Food Scrap Drop-Off Program. While the Food Scrap Drop-Off Program shows good momentum, **total town diversion is just 2.1%**. Executing a robust and deliberate town-wide strategy is essential to address the waste crisis and increased costs that are looming.

Food Scrap Drop-Off Program

- **Promoted first five drop-off sites:** Town Hall, Norfeldt Field, Eisenhower Park, Westmoor Park, and the Brixton Street Recycling Center. [Details.](#)
- Registration grew to **1,170 users** by December 2025.
- Residents diverted a total of **65,791 pounds** of food scraps between May and December—and monthly collections almost tripled since the program start. Overfilled bins at the Westmoor and Town Hall sites showed that resident demand outpaced capacity, driving the addition of more drop-off sites in 2026.

**3 MILLION Pounds
Each Month**

Food waste makes up about 24% of our trash, and West Hartford throws out over 3 million pounds of garbage every month.

40% of Connecticut's trash is being trucked out of state, so reducing trash also reduces the environmental and financial burden on all of us.

Pumpkin Recycling

Doubled pumpkin recycling from 16,100 pounds in 2024 to **33,000 pounds** in 2025. While the increase is a positive trend, for a town of 63,000 residents those numbers should be higher.

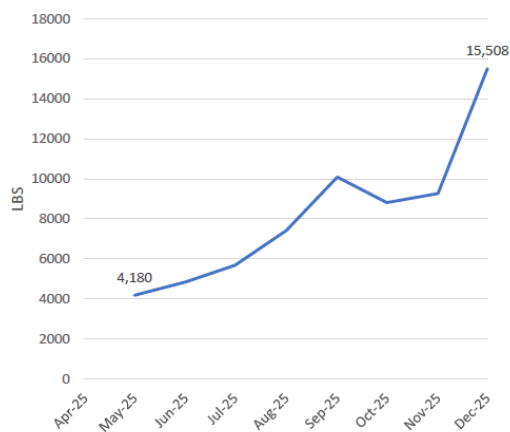
Waste Contamination

Explored provisions of Town of West Hartford, Code of Ordinances, Chapter 94: *Garbage, Rubbish and Refuse*, for potential to use monitoring, enforcement, and fines as tools to reduce residential waste contamination and encourage proper recycling.

2025 FOOD SCRAP METRICS



Drop-off Food Scrap Program: Waste Impact



Results

- Program-to-date (Apr-Dec) = **65,791 lbs** or **32.9 tons**
- Monthly lbs up **over 3X** since start of program
- Capacity constraints (4 drop-off bins often full) may have negatively impacted results
- High Dec lbs potentially due to holidays
- Tip fee savings = $(\$102 - \$67) * 32.9 \text{ tons} = \$1,151$

Keep in Mind...

- About **24%** of West Hartford's waste is food scraps; **725,000 lbs** of food scraps are thrown away each month
- 15,283 lbs = **2.1%** of food waste diverted
- Program start shows a willingness on the part of residents to divert food scraps, but even a successful drop-off program will not have a meaningful impact on West Hartford's total food waste, nor will it generate significant *tangible* cost savings.
- Also, keep in mind, waste **diversion** is not waste **reduction**.

1-2% is typical for drop-off

Drop-off Food Scrap Program: Climate Impacts



NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Policy Development

- **Native Planting Policy:** Drafted a comprehensive municipal planting policy designed to maximize native plants and prioritize low-impact land management on town properties. The policy aims to mitigate habitat fragmentation and aligns directly with West Hartford's Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD), Climate Crisis Resolution, and Pollinator-Friendly Community Resolution. Working group leaders continue to engage town staff to advance formal adoption.

Habitat Restoration

- **Wolcott Children's Forest Entrance:** Installed native plants at the Wolcott Park entrance to restore ecological value to underutilized grass lawns. In September 2025, hosted a community "Pollinator Habitat Open House" event drawing more than 75 residents.
- **Wolcott Meadow Infrastructure:** Partnered with the West Hartford Garden Club, Leisure Services, and Public Works to manage the ongoing multi-year transformation of park acreage into a native meadow ecosystem using expert, professional oversight for site preparation and community winter-sowing techniques.



Public Awareness & Campaigns

- **Firefly Magic 2025:** Developed a community awareness campaign to protect vulnerable local firefly populations by educating residents on reducing pesticide use and light pollution. Beta-tested the campaign at the Celebrate West Hartford festival in June 2025, engaging over 200 residents.

COMMUNICATIONS & OUTREACH ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Community Newsletters

To better engage and inform residents about ways to live more sustainably, we launched our newsletter with an Earth Day edition, publishing a total of six issues in 2025 and reaching an average of **2,700 readers per issue** with a **65% open rate**.

2025 Newsletter Archives are available for [April](#), [May](#), [July](#), [Sept](#), [Oct](#), and [Nov](#). Anyone may **subscribe** at <http://www.bit.ly/44tAuKb>.

Social Media

The Commission continued its Facebook engagement, re-established commission's Instagram account, and leveraged WHCi expertise and YouTube for short and longer form videos.

Events

Commissioners and town staff collaborated to create new posters and educational materials for tabling, focusing on actionable steps like Home Energy Assessments and Active Transportation for **Celebrate West Hartford**, **Electric Showcase**, and **Sun Day** events.

Website

Commissioners and town staff developed preliminary content for a resident-focused climate action website on the Town's platform. The address for the Commission web page is:

westhartfordct.gov/government-services/boards-commissions/sustainable-westhartford.



SUSTAINABLE CT



A State Leader in Sustainability

Sustainable CT is a voluntary certification program to recognize thriving and resilient Connecticut municipalities. As a grassroots municipal effort, Sustainable CT resources include a wide-ranging menu of best practices. Municipalities choose Sustainable CT actions, implement them, and earn points toward certification.



West Hartford's collective efforts culminated in achieving **Gold-level certification** and the **Climate Leader Designation in August 2024**—the highest honors currently available in Connecticut.

Our Impact

Our work, outreach to residents, and many events held by the commission in 2025 are eligible for points towards the Town's recertification in August 2027. This includes:

- Creation of Wolcott Meadow and Wolcott Children's Forest Pollinator Habitats
- Wolcott Pollinator Habitat Open House
- Climate Change Talk: Where We Are and What You Can Do
- Sustainable Snow Removal presentation
- Electric Showcase & SUN Day Celebration
- WHCi videos/talk shows on business energy efficiency programs and waste
- Educational booth at Celebrate! West Hartford

Next Steps: A Strategic Roadmap for August 2027

To maximize the impact of these achievements, the Commission has intentionally integrated the Sustainable CT action checklist directly into its own priority planning. Aligning upcoming certification actions, Sustainable CT best practice resources, Commission initiatives, and Town department initiatives will form a clear, actionable, strategic roadmap to attaining West Hartford's Sustainable CT recertification by August 2027.

ABOUT US

2025 Sustainable West Hartford Commission Members

Back: David Sagers (Chair), Andrea Yuliano, Kim Hughes, Ally Schoenhorn, Bernard Pelletier (Secretary), Stephen Sack (Vice Chair), Ted Newton.

Front: Pat Wilson, Catherine Diviney (Staff Energy Specialist), Kelly Kennedy, Mia Magnusson (Hall HS Student Representative)



Not pictured: Jonathan Ferrigno, Christy Matthew, Erica Kahn (Conard HS Student Representative), Katherine Bruns (Staff Recycling Coordinator).

2025 Staff Liaisons

Catherine Diviney, Energy Specialist

Katherine Bruns, Recycling Coordinator

2025 Working Group Members

The Sustainable West Hartford Commission thanks the many residents who support and strengthen our work by serving on our working groups for Energy, Waste & Recycling, and Nature-Based Solutions. Your efforts make a difference and are appreciated! Additional residents interested in joining a working group are welcome. Email us with your interest at Sustainable@WestHartfordCT.gov.

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